

FALL 2004

The Tribal Update is a quarterly publication of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. It is distributed to leaders of all eight state and federally recognized tribes, as well as other interested parties.

Alternative accessible formats of this newsletter will be provided upon request. For further information or additional copies, contact Gayle Shirley, DPHHS Public Information Officer, at 406-444-2596 or gshirley@state.mt.us

This and previous issues are also available online at dphhs.state.mt.us.

50 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of 20 cents each, for a total cost of \$10.00.

IN THIS ISSUE:

- Fort Peck Foster Care Agreement ... 1
- Chippewa Cree Tribal TANF Program ... 2
- Rocky Boys Walk to School Day ... 2
- IHS Awards for Immunization Rates ... 3
- Browning Nursing Home Computer Donation ... 3
- Cultural Immersion ... 4

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

TRIBAL UPDATE



Fort Peck Tribes Take Active Role in Administering Foster Care Services

After four years of negotiations, the Fort Peck Tribes signed an agreement in August that will give them a bigger role in managing foster care on their reservation.

The agreement, made with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) and the Child and Family Services Division (CFSD) of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, says the tribes will collaborate with the state and the BIA in providing case management for Indian children who are placed in foster homes.

“The agreement clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of the parties providing child protection services on the Fort Peck Reservation,” said Eric Barnosky, regional administrator for CFSD. “Before the new agreement, the lack of clarity was interfering with the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs.”

According to the agreement, the Fort Peck Tribal Court must promptly review any case in which an Indian child is removed from his or her home because of abuse or neglect, Barnosky said. The agreement also follows the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, which says Indian children must be placed with family, extended family, or other tribal members.

“Our goal is to make sure Indian children and families are treated with sensitivity and with respect for their unique culture,” Barnosky said. “As a result of this agreement, the tribes will be involved in placing kids in foster care and will be able to monitor their progress.”

The state provides the six other reservations in Montana with funding to run their own foster care programs. The arrangement with Fort Peck is unique in that the state will provide services to children on the reservation but with the oversight of the tribes.

(continued on next page)

Fort Peck Tribal Council Chairman Ray K. Eder and other members of the council pose with Shirley K. Brown, administrator of the Child and Family Services Division, and Toni Greybull, acting BIA superintendent, at a ceremony marking the signing of an agreement giving the tribes more involvement in managing foster care services. (Photo by Eric Barnosky)



Foster Care *(continued from page 1)*

“The tribes have not given up any sovereign rights,” said Shirley K. Brown, administrator of CFSD. “We’re going to work together as partners in the best interests of the Fort Peck people.”

For more information, contact Brown at 406-444-5900 or shbrown@state.mt.us.

Chippewa Cree Finalize Tribal Welfare Program

The Chippewa Cree Tribe will begin issuing benefits in November through its own Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program.

The tribal council received federal approval late last summer to assume administration of the program, which was previously run by the Human and Community Services Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. The state and tribe had entered into a formal agreement to facilitate a smooth transition for the funding and caseload.

TANF is a federally funded program that provides cash and other assistance to low-income families. Many of the services provided through the program are aimed at helping recipients find self-sufficiency through employment.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has

designated \$1.79 million per year for three years to the Rocky Boys TANF program, which will be administered by the Chippewa Cree Tribal Business Committee. Elaine Top Sky will serve as the tribal TANF director. She said she is planning an open house to welcome TANF participants into the new tribal program.

The Chippewa Cree TANF program is the 43rd approved tribal TANF program in the nation. Only two other reservations in Montana—the Salish Kootenai and Fort Belknap—have similar programs.

Chippewa Cree officials say the administration shift will mean more effective, culturally appropriate social services for the more than 300 tribal families and individuals who currently get TANF benefits.

For more information, contact Karlene Grossberg, chief of the state Public Assistance Bureau, at 406-444-1788 or kgrossberg@state.mt.us.

Rocky Boys Schoolchildren Take Steps to Beat Diabetes

Close to 400 children on the Rocky Boys Reservation participated in International Walk to School Day in October thanks to a \$500 mini-grant from the Cardiovascular Health Program of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The event, organized by Rocky Boys Diabetes Wellness Center, was called “De-feeting Diabetes and Heart Disease One Step at a Time.” The goal was to

encourage children to improve their health by being more physically active.

Rocky Boys public schools participated in the global event last year; this year children from Head Start joined them. Even children who usually ride the bus to school were dropped off about a half a mile from school so they could walk with their peers.

Event organizers used the mini-grant to pay for lunch bags that the Diabetes Wellness Center filled with nutritional fun cards, a piece of fruit, a container of milk, a bagel or muffin, and yogurt.

Tracy Burns, a nutritionist at the Diabetes Wellness Center, estimated that as many as 50 to 70 percent of Rocky Boys children are at risk of getting diabetes in the next 5 to 10 years. Physical activity is a key to helping prevent the disease, she said.

Indian Health Services Are Honored for Vaccination Rates

Indian Health Service clinics in Montana have been publicly applauded recently for their successful immunization programs.

The Billings Area Indian Health Service received national recognition for its 90 percent coverage rate for 2-year-old children in its region. Dr. Stephen Cochi, acting director of the National Immunization Program, presented the award during the National Immunization Conference in Nashville last May.

This was the fourth successive year that the IHS has received the prestigious award. The Billings Area IHS oversees the provision of comprehensive health care services to about 52,000 people on all seven Montana reservations and the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming.

"I'm truly impressed with the efforts of the public health staff in these clinics," said Joyce Burgett, head of the Montana Immunization Program. "It takes tremendous effort for them to maintain rates that are that good for four years."

Meanwhile, the Montana Immunization Program has presented a "Light House Award" to the Browning IHS for its innovative outreach efforts to improve accessibility to flu shots in 2003.

Members of the Browning IHS nursing staff—Mona Connel, Junaita Kittson, Susan Hall, Sheryl Hillaboe, and Geradetta England—hosted an after-hours flu vaccination clinic during which they inoculated 700 children in their community. They also used a mobile cart to visit and vaccinate hospital and nursing home staff during the workday.

"Taking the vaccine to the staff so they didn't have to leave their units during the workday was a great strategy," Burgett said. "It improved the immunization rates of the local health care workers without compromising patient care. These nurses are to be commended, and we're proud to be serving the public with them."

Burgett noted that the idea of using a mobile cart to vaccinate health care workers at their convenience was highlighted recently in the *American Journal of Nursing* as a successful and innovative strategy.



Victoria Skunk Cap and Browning Nursing Home volunteer Tashaunna Goss work at a computer donated by the Senior and Long Term Care Division of DPHHS.

Computer Benefits Residents of Browning Nursing Home

Browning Nursing Home residents are giving new life to an old computer donated by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS). In return, they're seeing the quality of their own lives improve.

DPHHS gave close to 400 computers to nonprofit organizations around the state last spring and summer

(continued on next page)



Several DPHHS Staff Members Spend Week Immersed in Plains Indian Culture

About half a dozen DPHHS staff spent a week in August at the Two Worlds Cultural Immersion Camp on the Crow Reservation. The goal of the event, which is sponsored by the In-Care Network of Billings, is to give participants a deeper understanding of Northern Plains Indian culture.

"The opportunity to experience one nation's culture, meet honored elders, and talk about mutual needs and how to work better together was incredible." -- Gail Gray, DPHHS Director

"It changed my perspective on the unique issues Indian people face every day. I would recommend this experience to anyone who has the desire to examine their own knowledge and biases and the willingness to then make changes as a result of this experience." -- Karlene Grossberg, Public Assistance Bureau Chief

"The cultural immersion camp was a revelation. It provided me with a much deeper insight not only about how to work with Native American people, but about the great potential that close and understanding relationships represents for all of us." -- Chuck Hunter, Health Resources Division Administrator

Computers *(continued from page 3)*

after its Offices of Public Assistance upgraded to new equipment. Many of the computers were distributed through the Senior and Long Term Care Division to nursing homes and senior citizen centers.

Dawne Stokes, local ombudsman for the Area III Agency on Aging, received several of the computers and convinced the Browning facility to set one up for residents to use to communicate with their families. While the computer was being installed, Victoria Skunk Cap, a stroke victim who can't speak or hear well, wheeled over in her wheelchair to check out the new toy.

"I want something to eat," she typed on the keyboard.
"Can I have some cake?"

The simple message represented a breakthrough for Victoria, who had been having trouble communicating her needs to nursing home staff.

The volunteer setting up the computer typed back,
"There is no cake, but we will get you some ice cream."

"You should have seen the smile on (Victoria's) face knowing that she can now converse with the staff," Stokes said. "It was great to see this happening right before my eyes."

Stokes said the resident has since tried to converse verbally with the nursing home staff, and a second stroke victim is using the computer to communicate. The nursing home is considering getting an Internet connection and buying a printer.

"A couple of years ago, Governor Martz suggested that everyone should have access to the Internet to keep in touch with their family and friends, especially in rural Montana," said Charlie Rehbein, head of the state Office on Aging. "We took that idea and suggested putting computers in nursing homes and senior centers for that very purpose. The response has been heartwarming."



Montana Department of Public Health & Human Services
P.O. Box 4210, Helena, MT 59604
www.dphhs.state.mt.us

